INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

by

M. J. LANE

PRESIDENT, CO-OPERATIVE FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA

Nominated guests and fellow co-operators:

On behalf of the Co-operative Federation of Australia which is the sponsor of this National Convention, I welcome you one and all.

This convention is an historic occasion for the Co-operative Movement in Australia.

The history of the Co-operative Movement is spread over a century of our growth to the present point where Co-operative Membership represents 22% of the Australian population. However, this is the first time in Australia on which representatives of so many and such diverse co-operative activities have gathered together.

The first significant meeting of co-operatives from various parts of Australia was held in Melbourne in 1918 on the initiative of Westralian Farmers' Co-operative Limited.

This meeting was one of co-operative producers organisations and was called with a view to establishing some form of coordinated marketing arrangement. It was officially opened by the Governor-General of the day, Sir Munro Ferguson and from it developed the establishment of an Australian co-operatively owned selling floor in London, with which New Zealand and South African Producer Co-operatives became associated. Through overseas farmers, Australian Outturns and other organisations, Australian Co-operatives are now worldwide and world respected.

Thirty years ago, Western Australia was the only state with a voluntary federation of co-operatives and this federation recognising the important role that co-operatives could play in the post-war development of Australia, arranged a National Business Conference here in Canberra in 1943 at which all six states were represented. Indisposition prevented the Prime Minister of the day from opening the conference and it was opened by the Hon. Minister for the Interior.

It was called as a Meeting of Consumer Co-operatives and from it came The Co-operative Federation of Australia. Since then, of course, various segments of the Co-operative Movement, Building Societies, Credit Unions, Producer Organisations, have all held National Conferences but never before has there been a representative gathering of every type of co-operative established in Australia such as we have here today.

Specific industries and specific services have their own special needs and it will still continue to be necessary for these interests to have their own conferences. However, everyone here today has a common concern in the protection and promotion of the basic principles of co-operation, of mutuality, of self help, or protecting and promoting the control of our own

resources in our own personal, community and national interests.

As president of the Co-operative Federation of Australia, the national body responsible for the organisation of this convention, it is appropriate for me at this time to state that members of my council see the co-operative way of life, and the co-operative way of business, assuming increasing importance in its role as a balancing influence between private and public sectors of our economic and social structure.

It is also appropriate for me to acknowledge the assistance provided over the years by the Australian Government in helping us carry out part of our International Co-operative Aid Projects. The Federation, with the help of the Government and Government officers, has organised and conducted training programmes for co-operators from Africa, Asia and the Pacific Region. These training programmes have been held under the auspices of various international bodies.

The Federation, with the assistance of the Foreign Affairs Department, the South Pacific Commission and the International Co-operative Alliance, has provided and continues to provide an advisory service to Co-operatives and Co-operators in the South Pacific Countries.

In 1971, the Federal Government provided financial assistance that helped make it possible for International Co-operative Alliance Councils to meet in Australia and you will hear later in the programme of the proposed Co-operative Trade Exchange to be established in Singapore.

We acknowledge, as I said, the assistance received from the Australian Government over the years in these and other matters. We also acknowledge the attention given by our Governments, both Federal and State, to our various representations.

I also acknowledge the help and advice received from the co-operative movements throughout the world but particularly in New Zealand, Great Britain, Canada and the U.S.A.. This help and advice has always been readily forthcoming and proves that the co-operative movement is truly an international one.

The objectives of this convention could be broadly stated as:-

1. To analyse the formation and administration of government policies of concern to co-operatives.
2. To assess opportunities for improved co-operative activities in Australia.

The Federation is grateful to the distinguished and authoritative speakers who have agreed to inform us on matters relative to our co-operative needs and we look forward to useful and constructive recommendations emerging at the conclusion of this convention.

It now gives me great pleasure to invite the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Lance Barnard, to officially open this convention.